WHEN THE LATE GEORGE LANE ENTERTAINED ROYALTY

(From the High River Times, June 1939)

The visit of royalty to Canada and all the discussions on what the welcoming committees should wear for the occasion, bring up recollections of the high excitement which prevailed in High River 20 years ago when the town had its first contact with royalty. It was in September, 1919, that the Duke of Windsor, then Prince of Wales, paid his first visit to the district as the guest of the late George Lane and Mrs. Lane on the Bar U ranch. At that time there was no anticipation that the visit would ever be repeated and High River set out to make the most of the honor.

One of the most vexatious questions for mayor and councillors was what they were going to wear. Their excursions into the realm of unfamiliar formal attire appalled them. They weighed the desirability of conforming to the standards to which the royal visitor was accustomed, against the cowtown joshing to which they would be subjected for many a year. And neither way was the outlook entirely happy. Finally, Mayor Lewis Williams settled the whole thing by declaring: "Boys, no matter what anyone else says or does, let's just put on our best suits and act natural."

And when the great day arrived they were mightily relieved that they had indulged in no sartorial extravagances, because the Prince arrived in a comfortable grey sport suit, and everybody felt quite at home. George Lane, his host, with a fine unconcern, was attiered in the old frock coat which had breasted western weather for many a long year, but to which he

was deeply attached. Mr. Lane's welcome to his guest was the same friendly comfortable greeting that anyone whom he approved would have received. The royal visitor remained at the Bar U a couple of days, and was so charmed with the carefree kindliness of western ranch life and the beauty of the countryside, that he purchased the adjacent E.P. ranch.

Probably no private home in Western Canada ever entertained more "notables" than were welcomed to the Bar U by Mr. and Mrs. Lane, and certainly no more democratic informal hospitality was ever accorded. On one occasion the Prince Fushimi of Japan and his retinue of admirals, generals and aides elected to visit with George Lane. A luncheon party was arranged at the Bar U, significant as an extension of cordial international relations. The representative of the Canadian government was quite bowed under the importance and gravity of the occasion. As luncheon was about to be served he drew George Lane aside and asked: "Where is your staff of waiters?" "Staff!" ejaculated Mr. Lane. "Now that's a fact. There is none to speak of. I've gone and mislaid my staff of waiters."

Agony lined the face of the government representative as he contemplated the result of this terrible faux pas. However, an Ottawa colonel, who had overheard the dialogue, came breezily to the rescue with: "Who expects a staff of servants on a ranch? I myself am an excellent waiter, and you gentlemen (indicating tow of the men present)--I'm sure you can turn your hands to a nice neat job." The two men whom he selected were Frank Bedingfield, owner of the present E.P., and Alex.

Fleming of the Bar U ranch who responded with enthusiasm. The meal went merrily forward, and the royal party experienced the novelty of eating with the waiters, who shamelessly pulled in their chairs and joined whenever their duties relaxed.

At the time the Bar U was in its hey day and known the world over, the word "publicity" was not as commonly used as it is today. But few individuals ever brought such favorable publicity to the foothills of Alberta as George Lane of the Bar U.